

2008 National Mental Health Conference hosted by the Indiana Department of Correction is a Great Success

Indianapolis, Indiana (June 26, 2008)—Indiana Department of Correction Commissioner J. David Donahue successfully kicked off the 2008 National Mental Health Conference entitled “Unlock the Mystery: Managing Mental Health from Corrections to Community” at the Adam’s Mark Hotel from June 23-25. This innovative conference spotlighted solutions for managing the number of mentally ill, substance abuse, and sex offender populations within the adult male, adult female and juvenile populations in jails and prisons. Attendees acquired tools that increased knowledge of the continuity of care from confinement to community-based supervision with the intention of rapid decompensation and re-incarceration.

“Since the national trend to close state hospitals in the 70s, correctional agencies have been tasked with being the largest deliverers of mental health treatment in the state,” stated Commissioner Donahue. “Our goal throughout this conference has been to initiate a national conversation designed to enhance how correctional and treatment professionals deliver quality care to the special populations within the criminal justice system.”



Commissioner Donahue gives the opening address at the 2008 National Mental Health Conference.

Over 800 attendees, representing 22 states, Puerto Rico, and Bermuda, participated in this interactive conference.

“The presence of such a distinguished group of professionals indicates the seriousness with which we all see the issue of mental health in corrections and the need to ensure that offenders are equipped with the best tools for successful community re-entry,” added Donahue.

The conference consisted of 4 featured speakers: Robert McGrath, MA, Clinical Director from the Vermont Department of Correction; Warden Paula Jarnecke from the Metropolitan Detention Center (Federal Bureau of Prisons); Warden Arthur Beeler from the Butner Federal Correctional Complex (Federal Bureau of Prisons); and Dr. Joel Dvoskin, Senior Psychologist from the Threat Assessment Group (TAG).

Furthermore, attendees were afforded the opportunity to participate in 60 educational workshops within the mental health, addiction and sex offender focuses. Conference guests also participated in a Roundtable Series on Wednesday, June 25, supported by an educational grant from Eli Lilly & Company. The series offered professionals within certain treatment professions the opportunity to network and discuss accomplishments and obstacles with fellow practitioners.



Conference attendees participate in a workshop.

In addition to all of the educational opportunities, participants were treated to “Mental Health in Corrections Night” at Victory Field, home of the Indianapolis Indians. Indiana Department of Correction Re-Entry Director, David Burch threw out the “First Pitch for Mental Health” in front of over 700 conference attendees.



Director of Re-entry David Burch prepares to throw out the first pitch at the Indianapolis Indians game.



Conference attendees enjoy the game.